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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 GENEVA 001739

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [KG](#) [UZ](#) [UNHCR](#)

SUBJECT: UZBEKS IN KYRGYZSTAN: UNHCR WEEKEND PURSUIT OF
RELOCATION OPTIONS

REF: STATE 131485

Classified By: Piper Campbell, Refugee Counselor, 1.4 b and d

11. (C) Summary: Staff of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Headquarters in Geneva were active the weekend of July 16-17 in monitoring the situation of Uzbek refugees in Kyrgyzstan and seeking possible "evacuation" options. Mission Refugee and Migration Affairs (RMA) officers spoke with UNHCR staff late Friday, and mid-day Saturday and Sunday to track status. As of Monday morning, UNHCR reports that discussions with Ukraine on accepting the bulk of the refugees in some temporary status continue, with UNHCR guardedly optimistic. Meanwhile, UNHCR continues logistical preparations in Kyrgyzstan and reports they could start movement two days after an evacuation site is identified -- although necessary lists and photographs will not be ready until mid-week. Meanwhile, UNHCR reports that they have better access to the 29 detained Uzbeks and that both the approximately 440 camp population and the 29 detainees have agreed to resettlement. UNHCR has expressed concern to Mission officer that some "residual population" (i.e., not accepted for resettlement) will remain in any evacuation country -- or will need some other solution. End Summary.

12. (SBU) UNHCR (Europe Bureau) representative called RMA officer the night of July 15 to report that a letter from UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner Morjane to the office of the Foreign Minister of the Ukraine, answering questions Ukraine had already raised with UNHCR, had been drafted late Friday and was awaiting signature. In the Friday night call, UNHCR also stated that it had made contact with the Permanent Missions of Romania and Moldova in Geneva to seek their participation, along with Ukraine, in a possible humanitarian evacuation of the 455 asylum seekers currently in Kyrgyzstan. Similar requests were to be made by UNHCR offices in capitals as soon as possible. Per UNHCR, Romania's Geneva Mission responded with positive interest in the issue, whereas Moldova's Mission was more reserved. Both indicated that they would need to communicate with capital before responding. In a subsequent call, UNHCR (Division of International Protection) representative advised that on Saturday, May 16, he had provided a written response to questions raised by the GOU in its Friday evening meeting with UNHCR resrep. (RMA has requested copies of both letters.) UNHCR confirmed that, in its letter to the GOU, it had indicated 2 months as the estimated processing time for resettlement of Uzbeks after their arrival in a safe processing location.

13. (SBU) UNHCR also told RMA that, per field reports, UNHCR Kyrgyzstan had excellent access Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning to the 29 Uzbeks currently in detention. In addition, UNHCR reported that all the Uzbek asylum seekers have now agreed to accept humanitarian evacuation as soon as it becomes available.

14. (SBU) In a Saturday, July 16 discussion with RMA, UNHCR Head of Desk for Central Asia said that he believed that the GOK would allow movement of the Uzbeki asylum seekers as soon as UNHCR had found a willing transit country -- although he cautioned that the Uzbeks might treat the larger camp population differently than the 29 currently in detention. While acknowledging the urgency of the matter and recognizing Uzbekistan's sustained pressure on Kyrgyzstan, he said he believed the Kyrgyz would still allow UNHCR time to work out a transfer. The most important thing Kyrgyz officials stressed, he said, was the need for UNHCR to work out an "exit strategy" within the next days.

15. (C) In separate conversations July 18, the Canadian and Australian missions indicated that, while they would probably participate in a resettlement effort, they did not expect their governments to offer facilities for humanitarian transfer to their territory. The Swiss mission said that it expected the Federal Council to decline any request for resettlement, and that a decision on the request for humanitarian transfer could not be made soon. The German mission indicated that it did not believe that the GOG was considering humanitarian transfer, though it had not yet taken a decision on whether to accept six cases UNHCR had submitted (referred) to it for resettlement.

16. (C) UNHCR Division of International Protection (DIP) also

reported Monday that, while it agreed with the concept of a package deal, it believed that the Kyrgyz may not allow the departure of detainees who have not been found eligible for refugee status. There are currently 29 Uzbeks in detention in Kyrgyzstan. UNHCR initially found 26 of them to be asylum seekers. However, UNHCR subsequently reduced that number to 25 (note: this change corresponds with the Netherlands rejection, on criminal grounds, of one of the four individuals whose dossiers UNHCR had submitted to it for emergency resettlement consideration.)
Moley